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THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

SALT LAKE CITY 84112

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

February 23, 1973

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
Stanford Medical School
Stanford, California 94305

Dear Josh,

After considerable thought, as you will surely guess, I am writing to ask if you think it would be appropriate and helpful to offer some extra input to the Stanford Medical School Admissions Committee regarding the application of a cousin, Jim Levenson (son of Aaron's younger sister). Unaccountably, from what I know (unless it's because he wears his hair long), the committee seems to be wavering on his application, and I think it would be a pity for him and for Stanford if the chance to get him were let slip.

In brief summary, Jim is ^{now}~~near~~ a senior at the University of Chicago, which he chose in part because it went after him with a full-scholarship offer. On the combined advice of Aaron and myself, he has majored in Math and Chemistry rather than follow a more traditional pre-med course. He has an essentially straight-A record, got high Med-Board test scores, and has done creditable (as far as I know) extra-curricular undergraduate research in Chemistry; in short, there's plenty of documentation to show he's a very bright guy. But on top of the brightness, he also possesses, in a very easy, unaffected and impressive way, great human sensitivity and personal integrity. (He seems to have naturally the sort of personal character I remember self-consciously struggling for at his age.) It's that combination that moves me to write - he is absolutely the kind of very intelligent, fundamentally decent guy, with the right human priorities, that I would like to see plugged into the American medical scene at as high a level as possible. The more I think about that, the more foolish it seems that I have hesitated to write simply because he is a relative - a pretty clear example of misapplied principle.

In any case, both Aaron and I recommended that Jim consider Stanford because he wanted to be in a situation where he could keep close to basic science and continue doing as much research as time permitted. After a number of interviews around, he himself decided that Stanford was the clear first choice. I learned from him early last week, though, that he is on some sort of "hold list" at Stanford and that time will probably force him to choose another school.

(Continued)

Aaron Novick
relative

OK

He found out about the "hold" situation by a direct inquiry prompted by the fact that two other Chicago students had been accepted by Stanford last month. One of these Jim judges to have about the same qualifications as himself, but the other's qualifications are much less apparent to him. Jim's honesty is such that I take his evaluation at face value and am curious about what happened quite apart from being disappointed that he wasn't simply accepted. I don't know how the Admission's Committee is constituted at Stanford or what its current admissions criteria and objectives are. (I do know that both objectives and criteria were so hopelessly confused at Harvard in recent years that policy bordered on caprice.) And I certainly don't know how or whether to offer my own input to the committee.

So I'd like to give you the problem, let you decide whether my comments should be offered (the "appropriate and helpful" questions), and if you think they should, to have you forward them. (Obviously I'm also asking you to vouch for my own probity in that case.) Clearly, it might be a good idea for you to have a look at Jim's file first if you can to see if there is some evident reason he wasn't accepted. Also, you might mention the thing to Dave Hogness because I think Aaron may have talked to him about it, and I can conceive of the committee being offended if you both bring the case up.

Thanks for all that, Josh, and let me know what you decide.

Personal news: Son Benjamin is growing in a fine way. At 10 weeks, some baby reflexes have been replaced by what I interpret to be a volitional smile. Anna is proving herself a fine mother. --- Work in the lab is moving along, though fitfully at times, and I'm still happy to be playing with neurons.

Best to Margurite. When are you coming to see Utah?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Larry".